Vol. IV. Numb. 73.

THE OBSERVATOR.

Of the Lawfulneſs of the preſent War. Of the Ballance of Power in Europe. *Of the Death of* Mercurius Politicus *and the* Moderator. *Of Reſtraining the Preſs.*

From Saturday December the 8th, to Wednesday December the 12th, 1705.

Country-m. MAſter, I have read over your Letters, and I find you Challeng'd in ſeveral of 'em, to juſtifie the Lawfulneſs of the preſent War. Pray, Sir, let us hear your Opinion in this Point?

Obſ. The Letters themſelves convince you that they come from the *Faction*, and you may be ſure have no good meaning in 'em; and I ſhall not readily anſwer to the Point. The War you know was commenc'd on the Account of the *Emperour*, in whoſe Favour I have ſaid too much already, unleſs I had been better us'd for my Pains; and therefore ſhall never more juſtifie the *Emperours* Title to the Crown of *Spain*, leſt his *Dougbty Envoy* ſhould bring a ſecond Second Hand Complaint; but I ſhall confine my ſelf to the Juſtification of that ſhare which *England* does bear in the preſent War.

Whether the Houſe of *Auſtria* has a Juſt Title to the Crown of *Spain*, it matters neither you nor me, nor any of the People of *England* that pay Taxes towards the Support of the *Emperours Cauſe*. We are ſure *France* had no Title, and all Mankind know that as *France* before was a troubleſome Neighbour, it would be much more ſo, having the Kingdom of *Spain*, the Dominions and Territories, thereunto belonging, added to it.

Now to prevent this Evil, it ſeems both Prudent and Juſt in *England* to joyn in the preſent Confederacy, to pull down a *Tyrant*, a common *Oppreſſor*, and one that wanted to be a *Univerſal Monarch*, which being poſſeſs'd of the Kingdom of *Spain* would have taken one large Step to that Grandure.

The Concern of *England* in this War is to preſerve the *Ballance* of *Europe*; and this is done by keeping Princes within their Juſt Bounds, that if any of 'em ſhould Invade their Neighbours Territories, Rob, Plunder, and make Depredations on Innocent People, that then the other Powers ſhould preſently Arm, bring the *Oppreſſors* to Reaſon, and make them Refund and give Satisfaction.

This ſeems to be a Natural Alliance, drawn up by the Hand of common *Juſtice* and *Equity*; and which all Princes, by the Law of *Nature*, are obliged to enter into. Suppoſe, *Country-man*, you had in your Village a Man of a *Tyrannical Temper*, and this Man ſhould abuſe ſome poor *Cottager*, his Wife and Children, Rob 'em of their Goods, and turn 'em out of Houſe and Home, would not you and all the Honeſt Men of the Neighbourhood ſtand by this poor Man, defend his Life and Goods from the Violence of the *Oppreſſor*? Yes, certainly, it is your Duty ſo to do: *Natural Juſtice* directs you thereto; and 'tis the ſame thing in Reſpect of Princes; they ought to do the ſame to ſuch mighty *Nimrods* as would Devour the Lands, Territories and Poſſeſſions of their Peaceful Neighbours.

So, Honeſt *Country-man*, let us fix the Concern of *England*, to bring the *Ballance of Power* in *Europe* on an even and equal Poiſe; and then let us conſider, in order hereunto, how this Ballance came to be broken, how ſome Powers came to be totally Deſtroy'd, others Invaded and Weakned, and ſome grown to an exceſſive Bulk and Greatneſs.

We muſt look backwards as well as forwards, when we conſider the Publick Affairs. He that looks only forwards, may come to the End of his Journey; but when he comes there, for want of looking backwards, he may have left ſo many things behind him, as may render his Expedition fruitleſs; and ſo may have the Melancholy Diverſion of going back from whence he came.

This has too often hapned in Publick Affairs. Wars have been Commenced, have been carried with Vigour, Thouſands of Lives have been loſt, and the War has terminated in a Crazy Peace, patch'd up, as Knaviſh Surgeons do Wounds, on purpoſe to have 'em break out again.

And all this proceeds from want of Retroſpection, from not Examining into the Cauſes of the War, and the means by which the *Ballance of Power* is broken. If we look backwards, we ſhall find that Princes broke the *Ballance of Power*, by the Encroachments made on the *Liberties* of the People, by extending their *Prerogative* beyond its juſt bounds. You know I muſt fetch no Inſtances from *Germany*, and therefore we'll content our ſelves with that of *France*.

The *French* King deſigning an *Abſolute Monarchy*, the firſt ſtep he took towards it, was the Invaſion of the *Liberties* of his own People. He had a long Journey to go, and many Neceſſaries were requiſite in ſuch an Expedition; the Wealth of his Kingdom, and the Perſons of the Subject were hardly ſufficient for ſuch an Enterprize; and therefore, *Conſideratis Conſiderandis*, to get Poſſeſſion of Kingdoms and Territories Abroad, he muſt firſt get Poſſeſſion of all at Home, which in time he effectually accompliſh'd.

Now, had the Neighbouring Princes done as they ought to have done, and have cruſh'd his *Ambition* in its Infancy, and not have ſuffered him to have Conquer'd his own People, he would never have Conquer'd them. But then, as of late, *Rebellion* was a ſad Thing, and *Jure Divino* was ſo Eminent a Doctrine at the *Court of Princes*, that they thought it a Damnable Sin to aſſiſt an Innocent Injur'd People againſt their Lawful Soveraigns.

But many of the Neighbouring Powers to *France* has paid dear enough for this Omiſſion; much better had they aſſiſted the People of *France* againſt their *Tyrant*, than ha' let him, by Oppreſſion, grow Powerful enough to Oppreſs Themſelves.

Hence

Hence it follows, That a *Ballance of Justice* ought to be maintain'd; for without it a *Ballance of Power* can never Subsist.

By a *Ballance of Justice*, I mean, the Preservation of the *Rights, Priviledges* and *Immunities* of the People of *Europe*, which ought to be defended, as well as the *Rights* of Soveraigns. And that when Princes are restored to their *Rights*, the People be restored to their *Priviledges*, otherwise the *Ballance of Power* cannot be maintain'd.

For if the People have the full possession of their *Rights*, the Prince will be Incapacitated to disturb his Neighbours by War; he'll want Money; he'll want Men and other Necessaries; he will not be able to make Invasions and Depredations on his Neighbours, without the Peoples Consent. And as a *Ballance of Power* is to be maintain'd in *Europe* by Confederated Powers, such a *Ballance* is to be preserved in every Kingdom, Principality, Greater or Petty States, as lesser Wheels that help forward the Motion of the great Machine of *Power*.

A War that is carried on, only for the Interest of Princes, without any Respect to the *Priviledges* of the People, may keep one *Tyrant* from devouring another, and so give 'em Opportunity of preying upon their Innocent People. But to set the Statue of *Peace* on a sure Pedestal, fix'd and immovable, is to set Mankind on their Original *Basis* of *Liberty*; to maintain and preserve the *Constitution* of Countries, the *Rights* of Soveraigns, and the Peoples *Liberties*.

Otherwise, when we wage War in Defence of the *Rights* of Princes, we only contend who shall be the Oppressors of the People, who shall Ride 'em, whose Beasts of Burden they shall be; and pray what Interest have such a People in such a War?

Were I to advise the Contenders for Empire and Kingdoms, I should propose as most seizable to draw the People into their Interest, that they give 'em all the Assurance imaginable, of the Enjoyment of their *Ancient Freedoms* and *Birth-Rights*: This would Encourage Men that have a long time been abandon'd to *Servitude*; for hopes of *Liberty* and *Property* will carry Men a great length in the Interest of a Prince, who without it will look askew upon him, like a *Cow* on a *Bastard Calf*.

But, *Roger*, you and I must not run too far into Politicks; yet, methinks, since the Free People of *England* do Contribute so much towards the Support of this War, I could wish the Free People of *Europe* might every where be restored to their *Ancient Rights*. --- What News at *London*?

Country-m. Master, very bad News for you *Scribblers*.

Obs. That's no News. However, let's hear it?

Country-m. Mercurius Politicus is Dead, I mean the Paper, not the Author. It Dy'd at *Ben Bragg's* Shop, last *Saturday* Morning.

Obs. What Distemper did it Dye of?

Country-m. It Dy'd of a *Chin-Cough* it caught in the *Court of Queens-Bench*. And, Master, there's another Paper Dead. The *Moderator*.

Obs. Very well. And what Distemper Dy'd that of?

Country-m. That Dy'd of the *Mulligrubs*. The Author set up for a *Wise Man*, and thought himself able to Correct all the *Scribblers* in *Christendom*, but the People not having such a Value for his Merits, as he expected, he laid down his Paper, which, otherwise, wou'd ha' broke his Printer.

And now, Master, they say you have met with a great Loss; for if all the *Libels* are laid down, you'll want Subjects, and so must leave of your Trade for want of Stuff.

Obs. With all my Heart; you know what you and I have got by it. But you know I must keep it up now in my own Vindication, that I may let the World know what great Occasion the *Emperors Envoy* had to Complain against me.

Country-m. Master, the Folk at *London* say, That some People are contriving to lay some Restrictions on the Press; and that there are two Old *Hawkers*, and an *Apple-Woman*, have drawn up a Proposal, *That all Printing Paper be Stampt, and pay so much a Sheet to the Queen.*

Obs. Very well; and so they are to be Commissioners in that *Fund*. With all my Heart. I am ready to comply with any thing, when it has the Sanction of a *Law*.

But, indeed, Honest *Country-man*, the Press needs a Regulation, but so little, that we need not trouble our Heads about it. And the means of preventing the Abuses of the Press, are soon found out when once we go about it.

It is, indeed, a shame that so many *Phamphlets* should be Printed without any Bodies Name to 'em; which may be prevented by Obliging all Printers to set some Known Persons Name to every Book, that the Government, or particular Persons, *Libel'd* in such Books, may come at the Authors.

The Security of Property in Books, is another thing wanting; for no one can call his Book his own, when the *Land-Pirates* take all Printed Books for their own Copies. But I shall Talk more of this Subject in due time.

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